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Intelligence panel considered a new probe of Mondale aide

Ex-Carter official tied to loss of spy in Moscow

Political interference cited in 1980 inquiry.

By Bill Gertz
NEW YORK TRIBUNE STAFF

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WASHINGTON — The Senate Intelligence Committee recently weighed a congressional request to reopen its ultra-sensitive 1980 probe of Walter Mondale's top foreign policy adviser.

The committee denied the request despite charges that the investigation was obstructed by political tampering and unwillingness to air explosive, top-secret information, according to intelligence sources and congressional documents made available to the *New York Tribune*.

The investigation 4 years ago reportedly cleared the Mondale aide, David Aaron, of charges he revealed information that led to the loss of a deep-cover American spy working in the Soviet Foreign Ministry in Moscow.

At the time, Aaron was President Carter's deputy national security adviser. He is currently a close adviser on foreign affairs to the Democratic presidential nominee.

Aaron, in a telephone interview, would not comment on the allegation. He confirmed that there was an "extensive investigation," but he denied that it was "an investigation of me." He referred questions to the office of Sen. Barry Goldwater, R-Ariz., chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee.

"He's the man who made the

decision," Aaron said of the committee's recent determination not to reopen the 1980 probe. Goldwater could not be reached for comment.

A spokesman for the Mondale-Ferraro campaign refused to comment on the report. Aaron, who has been described as Mondale's most



David Aaron, left, was investigated by the Senate Intelligence Committee, chaired by Sen. Barry Goldwater, after the loss of a key CIA agent in Moscow. UPI

important foreign policy adviser, earlier served as his staff assistant on the Senate Intelligence Committee when it was headed by the late Sen. Frank Church. He recently returned from Israel where, according to a report in the *New York Times*, Aaron attempted to improve both Mondale's and his own relations with the Israelis.

In October 1983, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence was first asked to provide records of the Aaron investigation by the House Post Office and Civil Service subcommittee on human resources. A letter from subcom-

mittee Chairman Don Albosta, D-Mich., and the subcommittee's minority leader Dan Crane, R-Ill., requested records "relating to the possible compromise of highly classified information" involving "high-level personnel of the National Security Council at that time [1980]."

Report on leaks

In May, the subcommittee released its report on unauthorized disclosures during the 1980 election, specifically covering the

transfer of former president Jimmy Carter's debate notes to the Reagan campaign. The leaks were traced to Carter's National Security Council (NSC).

According to congressional sources close to the investigation, "numerous allegations" of Carter NSC leaks during the subcommittee probe were ignored. The subcommittee's final report was described as "highly partisan" and incomplete. The report mentioned Aaron as the person responsible for preparing the foreign policy section of the purloined Carter briefing book.

A House staff member who pursued the NSC leaks on behalf of Crane was told by Intelligence Committee staff director Rob Simmons last June 22 that committee records were "too extensive to permit perusal by outsiders," including investigators with top-level security clearances. Simmons did not see the subcommittee's October request from Albosta and Crane, sources said.

Intelligence Committee Chairman Goldwater, in a reply to Crane

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on June 27, revealed that the 1980 investigation involved allegations that "an official of President Carter's National Security Council was responsible, through mishandling sensitive intelligence information in early 1977, for the loss of a valuable intelligence source."

No 'direct' evidence

Goldwater said the committee statements from officials of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the National Security Agency (NSA) had concluded that no "direct" information was uncovered. A recent staff review of the case, apparently in response to Crane's request, produced "no credible information" to warrant further investigation, the Goldwater reply stated.

Simmons confirmed Goldwater's reply in an interview with the *Tribune*. He said "there's no interest in pursuing it."

"Somebody could ask me to proceed at any time," Simmons said, "but that's where the matter lies at the present time."

However, a reply to Goldwater from Crane of July 13 states that "I believe evidence exists that the staff person conducting the inquiry [in 1980] was closely connected to the subject of the inquiry. Such a close linkage would, of course, affect the objectivity of the review." Simmons had no knowledge of the letter.

The intelligence sources said that the staff director of the Intelligence Committee in 1980, William Miller, was a "friend . . . and long-time associate with Aaron at the Institute for Policy Studies [IPS]." The IPS is a leftist research institute in Washington. Aaron has served as a consultant to the Center for International Policy, a related organization sponsored by the Fund for Peace.

Miller, currently an associate dean at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, "stayed in daily contact with Aaron" during the committee's investigation, intelligence sources said. Congressional sources said Miller was the only staff member present during a committee hearing connected with the investigation in late 1980 that was the subject of the request from Albosta and Crane. Miller could not be reached for comment.

Aide to Brzezinski

Another political ally who reportedly kept Aaron informed of developments during the investigation was Karl (Rick) Inderfurth, a former aide to Zbigniew Brzezinski at the NSC and currently with ABC

News. Inderfurth denied knowing about the Aaron investigation, although the House subcommittee on human resources report identifies Inderfurth as Aaron's chosen volunteer who helped prepare the Carter briefing book in September and October of 1980.

"I've worked with David, and it just didn't sound like the David Aaron that I know," Inderfurth said of the allegations regarding the loss of an agent.

Unauthorized disclosure of sensitive information — some of it classified — was rampant in the Carter administration. Carter, in his memoirs, admits "we could not solve the problem of deliberate leaks." It reached the point where Carter even considered "publishing the minutes" of high-level meetings.

Intelligence sources revealed that during the Carter administration the FBI conducted 10 security investigations of the White House staff concerning the disclosure of classified materials. Five of the investigations focused on Aaron. sources said.

The Trigon case

The most controversial probe involving Aaron became a cause célèbre among conservatives and reportedly caused sharp divisions within the U.S. intelligence community over the issue of technical versus human intelligence-gathering methods. The case involved an American CIA agent in Moscow code-named Trigon.

The following account of Aaron's role in the Trigon case is based on published reports, congressional documents, and information confirmed by intelligence sources.

Trigon was a Soviet embassy clerk in Bogota, Colombia, when he was recruited by the CIA in 1974, according to John Barron, author of the book *KGB Today*. The New York Times reported that Trigon was recruited in Argentina sometime in the early 1970s.

Recent information based on a KGB agent's defection in 1979 indicates that Trigon was Aleksandr Ogorodnik. Other published accounts said Trigon was Anatoli Filatov. Both men worked inside the Soviet bureaucracy in Moscow during the late 1970s.

From 1975 until the Soviets discovered him in the spring of 1977, Trigon worked in the Global Affairs Department of the Soviet Foreign Ministry. He was in the unique position — for espionage — to handle incoming cables from Soviet ambassadors around the world.

Trigon's last report to the CIA was the transcript of a cable from Soviet Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Dobrynin describing an April 1977 breakfast meeting in Washington between Dobrynin and former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. Trigon's transcript of the cable quoted Kissinger criticizing a Carter administration arms control offer to reduce strategic weapons. Kissinger later acknowledged meeting Dobrynin on April 11, 1977, but denied criticizing the Carter plan. The New York Times reported that the CIA verified through the NSA that the cable was sent from the Soviet embassy that day.

Aaron's dinner disclosures

Details of the Trigon cable — which has since disappeared from the CIA's files — were circulated among top U.S. intelligence officials and the National Security Council. Some time in April, reportedly during a dinner party in Washington at the Jordanian embassy, Aaron allegedly mentioned some details of the cable during a conversation with an East European diplomat. The Times reported that the conversation involved a Romanian diplomat. An unidentified "Third World diplomat" overheard Aaron's remark, according to intelligence sources.

Some time after the Trigon information was leaked, the NSA obtained evidence of the conversation which originated from either the Romanians or from the unnamed diplomat. Columnist Jack Anderson reported the information concerned Warsaw Pact nuclear weapons.

Gen. Ion Pacepa, a former deputy chief of counter-intelligence for the Romanian security services confirmed the validity of that evidence when he was debriefed by the CIA after defecting in 1978, according to intelligence sources. Pacepa was in a position which gave him access to Warsaw Pact secrets.

CIA probe

The NSA findings sparked a CIA investigation of the White House staff focusing on Aaron's alleged leak and the loss of Trigon. As the first step, all top-level White House access to secret reports was curtailed. Clearances were reinstated as those under scrutiny were cleared.

CIA Deputy Chief of Counterintelligence Leonard McCoy conducted an "operational analysis" of

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the Trigon disclosure. According to reliable intelligence sources, the analysis was never used during the Senate investigation of Aaron in 1980. The analysis reportedly concludes that Aaron was the cause of Trigon's demise. A CIA spokesman would neither confirm nor deny McCoy's employment with the agency.

Intelligence sources identified a "special assistant" to then National Intelligence Officer (NIO) Howard Stoertz, who reportedly informed some members of the intelligence community that White House security clearances were canceled because Aaron had uncovered the identity of an agent. CIA spokeswoman Kathy Furson confirmed that Stoertz, a political appointee, was an NIO for strategic programs during the time in question. She said Stoertz is no longer with the agency.

Moscow contact arrested

In July 1977, Martha Peterson, who according to *Newsweek* acted as Trigon's American contact in Moscow, was arrested by the KGB in the process of contacting an agent. Soviet press accounts said Peterson left poison ampules for an "innocent Soviet citizen" who was allegedly poisoned to death for blocking a CIA-run espionage ring.

Following Peterson's expulsion from the Soviet Union, the NSC ordered the CIA to "curtail all agent operations in the Soviet Union, pending the operational assessment being completed by McCoy," intelligence sources said.

"However, while this was occurring, the Trigon investigation was 'rolled up' by CIA officials," the sources stated.

On the eve of the 1980 Republican National Convention, *Newsweek* correspondent David Martin, citing intelligence "experts," was the first to reveal publicly that an American spy inside the Soviet Foreign Ministry was believed to be a "double agent." He reported that "suspicions heightened in the early months of the Carter administration." Kissinger told Martin that the Carter administration leaked the Trigon story in an effort

to embarrass him at the convention which was held the week the story appeared.

Martin linked the loss of the Moscow agent with the arrest of Peterson. He reported that the CIA believed Trigon "committed suicide."

Following press reports linking Aaron with the disclosure of Trigon, the White House labeled the allegations "completely

unfounded." A Jack Anderson column reported that the FBI and CIA had "dutifully confirmed" the Carter-Mondale White House defense of Aaron.

Intelligence sources close to the case report that the FBI denied investigating any member of the

NSC in connection with the Trigon disclosure probe. The CIA, sources said, declared that no American had been involved in the loss of Trigon.

As a result of press exposure, in 1980 Sens. Malcolm Wallop, R-Wyo., and Daniel Moynihan, D-N.Y., formally requested an Intelligence Committee investigation of the Trigon loss. The request reported there may have been "a major intelligence failure" related to "a senior government official."

The Senate investigation began in September and concluded in December 1980, having found no "direct" information implicating Aaron.

However, in addition to the fact that Aaron's political friends ran the probe — Aaron had worked on the staff of the Intelligence Committee — the investigation was confronted with an insurmountable security obstacle. According to intelligence sources, CIA Director Stansfield Turner withheld information about Aaron obtained by the NSA. (Under Carter's Presidential Directive/NSC-2, Turner reported daily intelligence directly to Aaron.) Rather than pursue the leads contained in the NSA information, committee members agreed to limit the investigation, intelligence sources said.

Data 'ordered destroyed'

The NSA reportedly obtained a communication from a foreign national whose country does not know the extent of the agency's intelligence-gathering capabilities. Washington Post columnist Jack Anderson, citing "scrupulously accurate" intelligence sources, wrote that the White House ordered the destruction of the information "under an executive order for the protection of private individuals." Anderson wrote that a copy of the NSA document(s) still exists.

Accounts vary as to what finally happened to Trigon. Two CIA agents under deep cover in the

Soviet government were lost during the Carter administration, both of whom could have been Trigon. Filatov was variously reported as a colonel in the Soviet military intelligence, the GRU, and as a senior official in the Soviet Foreign Ministry. Soviet press accounts in 1978

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reported that Filatov was sentenced to death by a "military court" for spying for an unnamed foreign power, lending support for Filatov's identity as a GRU officer.

A former KGB officer who defected in 1979, Stanislav Levchenko, testified that a "Line X" KGB officer — involved with scientific and technical espionage — knew about Filatov and Ogorodnik. Filatov reportedly supplied the CIA with detailed intelligence on Soviet military capabilities, including support for terrorism and "liberation" wars while working in GRU headquarters. Levchenko said he was told Filatov was caught by KGB surveillants while making a "drop" for his American contact.

Spy's life spared

Filatov's death sentence was commuted to a 15-year prison term as the result of a deal between Brzezinski and Dobrynin. Brzezinski, in his memoirs, recalls bargaining with Dobrynin over saving the life of an American spy, believed to have been Filatov. He told Dobrynin "the execution of the Soviet citizen would jeopardize any possible deal on the [return of two] Soviet spies." The two spies were traded in 1978 for five Soviet dissidents as part of a Soviet effort to gain American support for the proposed SALT II arms treaty.

Levchenko also testified that the Line X officer told him about Ogorodnik — a more likely source for the Trigon material. Levchenko told author John Barron that Ogorodnik was captured by the KGB after he was filmed copying documents in the Soviet Foreign Ministry. Barron wrote that Ogorodnik had access to cables from all Soviet ambassadors for a period of 20 months until the summer of 1977. Hundreds of these cables were turned over to the CIA which then circulated the information to the White House, National Security Council and the State Department.

Barron notes that the Soviets failed to discover the source of the foreign policy disclosures until the KGB "more precisely defined the intelligence being discussed in Washington." After that determination was made, the KGB traced the source to the Foreign Ministry and Ogorodnik, Levchenko said.

Ogorodnik committed suicide, Barron reports, after swallowing poison hidden inside his Mont Blanc pen — a pen that was to be used for writing his confession.